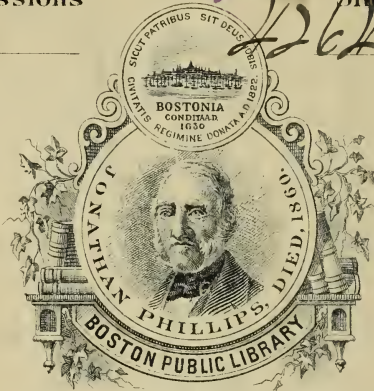




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# SPEECH

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

## VISCOUNT PALMERSTON,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

*On Wednesday, May 19, 1841.*

ON

### LORD SANDON'S RESOLUTION,

“That considering the efforts and sacrifices which Parliament and the country have made for the abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery, with the earnest hope that their exertions and example might lead to the mitigation and final extinction of those evils in other countries—this House is not prepared (especially with the present prospects of the supply of Sugar from British possessions) to adopt the measure proposed by Her Majesty’s Government for the Reduction of the Duties on Foreign Sugar.”

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LORD PALMERSTON rose, and spoke as follows :—

The Right Hon. Baronet, the Member for Kent, in the speech which he addressed to the house this evening, expressed his regret at the long duration of this debate ; that regret did not surprise me, because a debate less favourable to one side of the house, and attended in point of argument, whatever may be its result as to numbers, with greater triumph to the other side, it never has been my lot to witness ; I can well understand therefore that the Member for Kent should regret the protracted length of the debate ; and notwithstanding the speech of the Right Hon. Baronet, the Member for Tamworth, who has just sat down, and though I admit the great dexterity with which he has handled the various topics which he has treated, I do not think that even that speech will induce the Right Hon. Member for Kent to retract the regret which he has expressed.—[cheers.]

The Right Hon. Baronet, the Member for Tamworth, who has just sat down has been pleased to make himself exceedingly merry at what he conceives to be the forlorn condition of my Right Hon. Friend the Chancellor of Exchequer fishing for a budget. My Right Hon. Friend is fishing for no budget, he has caught his budget, and has laid it on the table. [cheers.] My Right Hon. Friend does not go begging to the other side for a budget. He has been reproached on former occasions, and has been taunted to night, for playing a part which is stated to be utterly unworthy of a Chancellor of the Exchequer. He has to deal with a deficiency in the revenue and has brought forward a budget to supply that deficiency, and he is charged with an entire forgetfulness of the duties incumbent on a Chancellor of the Exchequer, because instead of coming down with a proposal to add to the burthens of the people, he proposes to fill up the deficiency of revenue by relieving the people from a portion of those burthens. The Right Hon. Baronet is mistaken in saying that we asked him for his budget instead of ours. What we asked was, and not even to night has an answer been given to our question, tell us aye or no what you mean; we intend to supply the deficiency of the revenue by striking a blow at some of the great Monopolies which have hitherto retarded the prosperity of the country, you object to our proposal upon narrow and insufficient grounds; tell us then plainly whether you are willing to make up the deficiency in the way we have intended to do so; or whether you are prepared to vote new taxes for the purpose: That is the question put to the other side, and to that question we have had no answer.—[cheers.]

The Right Hon. Baronet, indeed stated that he would give us with the utmost frankness his opinion on the three questions about Sugar, Corn, and Timber: but what were his declarations, what were those explanations which were to be given in the spirit of such unreserved frankness? As to the Sugar duty, he threw over in the beginning of his speech, the principles and doctrines contained in the resolution of his Noble Friend, and said that the question was one of prudence, rather than of principle, and in the latter part of his speech he said that the only pledge he would give about the sugar duties was, that he would wait to see whether the expected supply from the East



Indies would cover deficiency in the duties, and that for the next year he should propose no change in the rate of duty; but the Right Hon. Baronet, reserved himself for the future, and beyond next year he would give us no pledge either way.—[cheers.]

Well, then we were to have his unreserved opinion on the subject of the Corn laws. What was it? why that he preferred a sliding scale to a fixed duty. A sliding scale may be a slippery thing. The Right Hon. Baronet took care to guard himself against declaring whether that sliding scale would or would not be a scale materially diminishing that amount of inordinate protection which the present law affords. But the question he was called upon to answer is, whether he is willing or not to supply a part of the deficiency of the revenue, by creating an extension of our commerce, by means of a reduction in the present amount of the duty on corn? About the Timber duties too we have had the Right Hon. Baronet's equally frank and candid declaration. If my ears did not deceive me, he said, that on that question he should keep himself totally unfettered for the future. That until he knew what is at present known only to my noble friend the Secretary for the Colonies, and until he should be put, like my noble friend, into the confidence of the Governor-General of Canada, it would be utterly impossible for him to afford us any information as to his views.—[cheers.]

Well then, Sir, am I not justified in saying, that never do I remember a great question like the present, debated by one party on grounds so narrow and inadequate. The question is, whether the great springs of our national industry shall be relieved from some of those artificial obstructions, which have hitherto retarded their development, or whether the sources of our national prosperity shall for the benefit of private interests, and of privileged classes, continue to be choked up? The question is between free trade, (and by free trade I mean trade open to competition) on the one side, and monopoly on the other. The question is between reason and prejudice; between the interests of the many, and the profits of the few—and the Honourable Gentlemen opposite, shrinking from a question which they dare not manfully grapple with; and afraid to join issue with us on the real merits of the case, because they know that the verdict of the country would be against

them, have endeavoured to narrow the discussion down to one collateral point, and under a delusive pretence to entrap this House and the country into an erroneous decision. [cheers].

The epithet hypocritical applied to the resolution by speakers on this side has been taken amiss by Gentlemen opposite; I will endeavour not to repeat offensive expressions; I will content myself with saying that this resolution is the homage which monopoly pays to free trade. But an homage so unwilling and constrained that those who pay it have not been able entirely to assume the virtue which they do not feel; but have thought it prudent to leave themselves a loophole for escape; and by that notable parenthesis which was so well exposed by my noble friend (Lord J. Russell) they have provided for themselves the means of descending if necessary from the lofty ground of principle on which they profess to take their stand, to the lower and more convenient level of expediency. [Cheers]. Their course reminds me of that sometimes pursued by their friends the Spanish Carlists — on more than one occasion in the late civil war, the Carlists when wanting to attack the Queen's forces placed and drove along at the head of their column a number of helpless captives, trusting that the humanity of their opponents would disarm their resistance, and that thus they should succeed in their attack. [Cheers.] So now the Honourable Gentlemen opposite put forward the sufferings of the negroes. I forbear from inquiring how many of those who are foremost in the cry, have had their share in causing those sufferings; though some things have passed in this debate which tend to throw light upon such an inquiry. But they put forward the sufferings of the negroes, and under cover of that pretence the whole band of monopolists rush forward to scale the fortress of power.

But the party opposite stand upon principle against interest. The principle they stand upon is the principle of humanity; the interest they oppose is that of the 25 millions of people who inhabit these islands. [Cheers.]

Now I honor and respect principle. I admire a man who acts upon principle, even though in carrying his principle out, he should thwart me, and obstruct my path. But then, let principle be the rule and not the exception. Let it be the guide of conduct, and the inspirer of actions,

and let it not be merely put forward as a pretext for the purpose of arriving at unacknowledged ends. [Cheers.]

They say humanity is their principle—an excellent principle it is—charity is said to begin at home; why should not humanity also be a domestic virtue—True it is there are millions of suffering negroes abroad; true also is it that we have millions of suffering fellow countrymen at home. Why should our humanity bestow itself exclusively on the former, instead of giving a due share of its attention to the latter—the principle laid down by Gentlemen opposite is that we ought not to consume the produce of slave labour,—that is the principle which has been maintained by the noble Lord the member for Liverpool, who moved the resolution, but it was not so clearly asserted by the Right Honourable the member for Tamworth. He seemed indeed to set it aside. This may have arisen from proofs which have been given by what has passed in other places, of the manner in which the people of the country view this matter; and I am not surprised that at the close of this debate, the principle on which Gentlemen opposite laid such stress at the outset, should now be allowed in some degree to remain unnoticed. [Cheers.]

But the principle contended for is, that we ought not to consume the produce of slave labour—Well if that principle is to be adopted, apply it honestly, faithfully, and throughout. Prohibit the importation of the enormous quantities of cotton which are brought every year from the United States of North America. Prohibit the tobacco; prohibit the rice which you bring from thence and which is all the produce of slave labour. [Cheers and cries of oh! oh!] The Hon. Gentlemen opposite laugh and cry Oh! at the very idea of such a thing—they shrink from such an application of their principle—they know that such an application of their principle would deprive of employment some millions of their fellow countrymen, and would bring them to utter ruin. They say it would not be expedient to do this—expedient indeed! a pretty principle this to take stand upon, the practical application of which is to depend on comparative expediency. [Cheers.]

But they think they have an answer to this argument: they say it is one thing to submit to an evil that exists, it is another thing to create a new evil; and although we have long encouraged slave labour in North America, that is no

reason why we should now begin to encourage slave labour in South America. But would the effect of our measure be that we should begin now for the first time to permit the consumption of things produced by slave labour in South America? Do we not already encourage the employment of slave labour in South America, and to the extent of our means? Do we not send out every year to the Brazil vast quantities of our manufactures, and are we not paid for them by the sugar and coffee which is there produced by the labour of slaves? Do we not glut the Brazilian market with our goods, and stimulate them every year more and more to produce more and more slave labour commodities to buy those goods with—[cheers.] It is true that the sugar and coffee come not here but go to Germany to be sold, and it is the money they are sold for, that is remitted to us; but does this alter the nature of the transaction. We are told that we must not encourage the employment of slave labour, and yet we first set the slaves in North America to work, to produce for us as much cotton as possible, and then we add to the value of that cotton and send it out to South America in order therewith to set the slaves of South America to work, to produce as much sugar and coffee as they can—[cheers.]

The details of these transactions of ours with the Brazilians are sufficiently curious to be worth following out. We say to the Brazilians we can supply you with cotton goods cheaper and better than any you can get elsewhere, will you buy them? By all means, reply the Brazilians, and we will pay you for your goods by our sugar and our coffee. No, say we, your sugar and coffee are produced by slave labour, we are men of principle, and our consciences will not allow us to consume the produce of slave labour, we cannot take your sugar and your coffee.—Well then, any body would imagine that the transaction ended here; that we sent our manufactures to some free labour market, and left the Brazilians to eat and drink their sugar and coffee, or to dispose of them as best they may. No such thing; we are men of principle, but we are also men of business, and we try to help the Brazilians out of their difficulty. We say to them, it is true that we cannot consume your slave labour sugar and coffee; but close by us, and near at hand live some forty millions of industrious thriving Germans who are not so conscientious as we are; take your

sugar to them ; they will buy it of you, and you can pay us for our cottons with the money you will thus receive ; and though we cannot take your sugar and coffee, we shall not scruple to take the money you have sold them for. But the Brazilians represent that there will be some difficulty in this. The Germans, they say, live on the other side of the Atlantic, we must send them our sugar in ships ; now our ships are few in number, and are ill fitted to cope with the waves of the great ocean ; what shall we do ? Our reply is ready—Do not let this disturb you, we have plenty of ships, and they are quite at your service—[cheers.]—It is true that slave labour produce would contaminate our warehouses, our shops, and our tables ; but our ships are different things, and they shall carry your sugar for you. But the Brazilians have another difficulty ; indeed there is no end to their difficulties. They tell us that the Germans are particular in their own way about these matters, and have a fancy for refined sugar. That it is not easy to refine sugar in Brazil, and that the Germans do not like the trouble of refining it themselves. Our desire to oblige is inexhaustible, we again step in with an expedient : Come never mind, we will help you here also ; we will not only carry your sugar, but we will refine it for you too. It is sinful indeed to consume slave labour sugar, but there can be no harm in refining it, which, in fact, is to cleanse it from part of its original impurity—[cheers.]

Accordingly, we refine the sugar, and to be sure we think we have done. Not a bit. The Brazilians are at us again. The fact is, say they, we produce a great deal of sugar ; more than the Germans will buy, at least at a remunerating price ; what are we to do with our surplus ? Well, our goodness is infinite ; having carried the Brazilians on so far, we are determined not to leave them till we have seen them safe home ; we have a remedy, we tell them, for this also ; we ourselves will buy your surplus. It cannot indeed be consumed at home, because the people of this kingdom are the inhabitants of the mother country, and are men of conscience ; but we will send it to the West Indies, and to Australia ; the people who live in those parts are only Negroes and Colonists, and what right can they have to consciences ; your slave labour sugar can do them no harm : and now, that you may not plague us any more about these matters, we tell

you at once, that if ever the price of our own sugar shall rise above a certain amount, we will then buy more of your slave labour sugar, and eat it ourselves—[cheers.]

Now without meaning the slightest offence, let me ask if it is not the grossest hypocrisy, that when these things are as notorious as the sun at noon day, we should be asked on pretences so hollow, and so inconsistent with what is constantly going on, to forego an arrangement which will relieve our Commerce, and assist our Finances—[cheers.]

But then it is said that the proposed measure will encourage the Slave Trade—[cheers.]

It can encourage the Slave Trade only in as far as it may give any great additional stimulus to slave labour, and I have already dealt with that objection. I can assure the House that if we had thought that this measure would give to the Slave Trade any encouragement, which we should not be able by other means amply to counterbalance, we would not have proposed the measure to Parliament, whatever might have been the advantages otherwise to be gained from it—[cheers.]

I think we have given proof of the sincerity of our zeal for the suppression of the Slave Trade. During the time we have had the honour to conduct the affairs of the country, we have laboured assiduously, perseveringly, and not without some success in the pursuit of this great end. The suppression of the Slave Trade is to be effected by two means—First, by the vigilance, and activity of that Maritime Police, which by virtue of our treaties with other powers we are enabled to establish. Secondly, by those measures of internal administration which Foreign Governments may put into execution, either in compliance with our suggestions, or in fulfilment of treaties concluded with us. I contend that the measure which we propose will assist us in both these respects; for it will give us a better chance of obtaining by treaty any additional powers and authority, which our Maritime Police may stand in need of; and it will increase the disposition of Foreign Governments to fulfil the engagements they have taken towards us, to put down the Slave Trade within their own territories—[cheers.]

When we came into office in 1830, we found the Slave Trade carried on to an immense extent, and under various

flags, notwithstanding the treaties we had then concluded with Spain, Portugal, Brazil, the Netherlands, and Sweden; and notwithstanding the declaration made at the Congress of Vienna, which was alluded to by the right hon. gentleman, the member for the University of Cambridge, and which cannot be mentioned with too much honour to the Statesmen who proposed it, and to the Governments by which it was adopted. The Treaties with Portugal, and Spain were insufficient for their purpose. That with Portugal only applied to Slave Trade north of the line, and neither that nor the Treaty with Spain gave sufficient powers for the detention of vessels equipped for Slave Trade. We had no Treaty with France, and Slave Trade was carried on under the French Flag—[cheers.]

The first thing we did was to obtain a Treaty with France, giving mutual right of search and detention to the cruizers of the two nations; and when gentlemen recollect how much the events of the last wars between England and France, must have rendered such a mutual right distasteful to both nations, and repugnant to their feelings, and their pride, the mere fact of such a treaty having been concluded, must be a convincing proof of the sincerity and zeal with which both governments were animated in their endeavours to put down this traffic; and the success of that treaty has been complete, for from that moment the Slave Trade has ceased to be carried on under the flag of France—[cheers]

Next we obtained from Spain, by a new treaty, larger powers for our cruizers, and fuller and more complete engagements on the part of the Spanish Crown; and I must say that if the Spanish Governors of Cuba, had acted with good faith and had rigidly enforced the law of Spain, and had punctually fulfilled the treaty engagements of the Spanish Crown, their exertions, assisted by those of the British cruizers would long since have entirely put an end to the Cuba Slave Trade; and a similar result would have been obtained in Brazil, if the Brazilian government had executed with good faith and vigour, the engagements it has contracted on this matter towards Great Britain.—[cheers.]

But we were told, and by many of the most zealous friends of abolition, that our treaties would be of no avail to suppress the Slave Trade until every maritime state in Chris.

tendom should have joined in the league to put it down ; For as fast as we drove the Trade from one Flag it would take shelter under another, and that nothing effectual would be accomplished as long as any one flag remained by which it could be protected. We felt the truth of this assertion, and we set ourselves to work in right good earnest to enlist all the maritime states of the world in the Christian league against Slave Trade—[cheers.]

We have laboured hard, and I am proud to say not without some success. At the present moment we have Treaties concluded and ratified, with France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, The Hans Towns, Sardinia, Tuscany, and Naples ; we have been negotiating a Treaty between England, France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, to be founded upon the Treaty now existing between England and France. The details of this Treaty have for several months been agreed upon, and the signature of the Treaty has been delayed solely by the peculiar position in which France has for some time past stood with relation to the other four powers, and not in consequence of any difficulties as to the Treaty itself ; and I trust that very shortly that Treaty will be signed. When that Treaty is signed we shall propose to Belgium, to Hanover, and to Greece to accede to it, and I trust there can be no doubt of our obtaining the accession of those states. The Greek Government has indeed lately, and very much in consequence of representations made to it by the British Government, passed a law prohibiting under severe penalties that Mediterranean Slave Trade in Greek vessels, which had begun to attract the attention of Europe —[cheers.]

If we succeed in all this, as I see no reason to doubt, we shall have enlisted all the maritime states of Europe in the Christian league. Nor have we been idle as to America. We have concluded treaties which have been ratified, with Brazil, Buenos Ayres, Venezuela, and Haiti ; we have concluded treaties which have not yet been ratified, with Mexico, Montevideo, Chile, and Bolivia ; and we have concluded additional articles which also have not yet been ratified with Brazil. We are negotiating a Treaty with the republic of the Equator, and we have proposed an improved Treaty to Brazil. We have also proposed a Treaty to Peru, but the present disturbed state of that



republic, prevents us, for the moment from making any progress in that negotiation; the party now in power in Peru having set up the strange doctrine that Peru is not to make Treaties with any but American States. [cheers.]

Well then if we succeed in these various negotiations, which I have no reason to think we shall not, we shall have enlisted in this league against Slave Trade every State in Christendom which has a Flag, that sails on the Ocean, with the single exception of the United States of North America; and I cannot believe that the American people, descended from the same ancestors as ourselves, imbibing from their earliest infancy the same principles of liberty, and the same doctrines of religion, will long stand aloof, and refuse to join the league, when they find themselves the only Christian nation that has not subscribed to its engagements—[cheers.]

They have hitherto been deterred from doing so by the fear of agreeing to that mutual right of search, which is the main foundation of all these treaties, and an indispensable means for the suppression of the Slave Trade. But they have not sufficiently reflected that the right of search which is necessary for the suppression of the Slave Trade, is a thing utterly and entirely different from that right of search, which on former occasions has been the subject of dispute between them and us. I trust that the people of America, will not allow themselves to be carried away by names, but will investigate the nature of things; and when they find, as on consideration they must do, that what we ask is not inconsistent with their national honour, and is essential for abating a great evil, they will join the other states of Christendom, and give the Slave Trade its death blow— [cheers].

I think then, that we may assert that our conduct proves that we feel no indifference about this great question of the Slave Trade; and that we are not men who would lightly, and in order to escape from a temporary difficulty, sacrifice a principle which has long guided our course, and forego an object which we have laboured so hard to attain. [cheers.] On the contrary as I have already said, by adopting the proposed measure, we shall acquire additional facilities for the accomplishment of our purposes. I have said that the Slave Trade would long since have been put down in the Brazils and in Cuba, if the Brazilian

Government, and the governors of Cuba, had chosen to enforce their own laws, and to fulfil the obligations of treaties concluded with us. Why have they not done so? Because they do not believe in the sincerity of our professions, and attribute our anxiety for the suppression of the Slave Trade, to motives very different from those which in reality prompt us. They see in us nothing but commercial enemies. On the one hand we shut our markets against their produce; on the other hand we try to prevent them from getting what they erroneously consider a necessary accession of labourers—[cheers]. They judge of one part of our conduct by the other. They see that with a spirit of narrow minded commercial jealousy, we exclude their produce, that it may not compete in our markets with the produce of our own Colonies; they think that we want to prevent them from getting fresh Slaves, in order that thus their sugar may cost them more, and may become dearer; and that so the sugar of our colonies may be better able to compete with their sugar in the market of Europe. [cheers] I regret that much has been said in this debate, which is ill calculated to deceive them in this point; for doctrines have been held in this discussion exactly the reverse of those which we press upon the Brazilians when urging them to abolish their Slave Trade. We have endeavoured to persuade them that free labour is cheaper in the end than slave labour, and that the cessation of the Slave Trade would be no injury, but in fact a benefit to them.—[cheers.] We have been justified in holding this language to the Brazilians, because we held it to our own West India Colonists. When we wanted them to agree to the emancipation of their slaves, we told them that in the end they would find free labour less expensive than slave labour, and we told them the truth; and nothing that has yet happened in the working out of the great experiment which we are making in the West Indies, leads me in the slightest degree to doubt that the assertion we made to them is true—[cheers]. But what has been the argument which has been maintained on this point in this debate by many gentlemen opposite, most connected with the West Indies, and best acquainted with the state of our Colonies there. They have all contended that if we admit to consumption in this country, the sugar of the Brazil

which they say is cheap, because it is the produce of slave labour, our own sugar which they say is dear, because it is the produce of free labour, will be driven out of the market; and thus our Colonies will be ruined; and the Hon. Member for the town of Cambridge pressed this argument with peculiar vehemence, saying, as a reason for his doing so, that on the decision of this matter, his dearest interest, nay, as far as his West India property is concerned, his very existence, depends. [cheers.] The great argument then of these gentlemen, is that the free labour sugar of the West Indies, cannot compete with the slave labour sugar of the Brazils; now what is this but declaring to the Brazilians and the Spaniards, that we have been telling them untruths all this while, as to the comparative cheapness of free labour? Will they not think that we have added to the odiousness of our commercial hostility, the meanness of duplicity and falsehood; that we have been endeavouring to trapan them into an abolition of their Slave Trade upon false pretences; telling them that slave labour is the dearest, and therefore the least advantageous to them, though we knew and were convinced all the while, that it is the cheapest and the most profitable—[cheers.]

Let us convince them by our conduct that in our doctrine we were sincere. Let us convince them that we do believe free labour to be, as it unquestionably is, cheaper than slave labour. Let us do so by admitting their slave labour sugar into competition with free labour sugar in our market, not indeed into competition on equal terms, for that is not at present proposed, but into competition modified by a discriminating duty of 50 per cent. in favour of the produce of our own Colonies. If this measure is carried, I shall enter into negotiation with the Brazilians and Spaniards with better hopes of success, and shall think that I have a better chance of persuading them to employ the means which they themselves possess, to put a stop to the Slave Trade within their own territories; for they will listen to our remonstrances with a more willing ear, when they shall believe them to be dictated by principle, and when they shall no longer suspect them to be the offspring of commercial jealousy—[cheers.]

Sir, I lay the greater stress upon this, because it is only from England, and from the exertions of England, that

any hopes can be entertained of the extinction of the Slave Trade, and of the ultimate abolition of Slavery throughout the world ; because it is England alone that feels any deep and sincere interest in the matter—[cheers.]

England now holds a proud position among the nations of the earth ; and exercises a great influence upon the destinies of mankind. That influence is owing in the first place to our great wealth, to our unbounded resources, to our military and naval strength. But it is owing still more, if possible, to the moral dignity which marks the character and conduct of the British people. I fear that the resolution of the Noble Lord, the Member for Liverpool, will tend, if adopted, to impair all these elements of our strength. I cannot but think that the respect which foreign nations have hitherto felt for the sincerity, the plain dealing, the straightforwardness of the British character, will be lowered, when they see the House of Commons adopting a resolution by which the principles of humanity and justice, are, (I am sorry to say so), prostituted to serve the party purpose of a day—[cheers], and I am sure that we shall sap the foundations of our strength, if by the continuance of our restrictive and prohibitory regulations, we undermine those great commercial and manufacturing interests which are the main supports of our power—[cheers.] Those who desire to see the principles of liberty thrive and extend through the world, should cherish with an almost religious veneration, the prosperity and greatness of England—[cheers.] As long as England shall ride pre-eminent on the ocean of human affairs, there can be none whose fortunes shall be so shipwrecked, there can be none whose condition shall be so desperate and forlorn, that they may not cast a look of hope towards the light that beams from hence ; and though they may be beyond the reach of our power, our moral support and our sympathy shall cheer them in their adversity, and shall assist them to bear up, and to hold out, waiting for a better day —[cheers.] But if ever by the assault of overpowering enemies, or by the errors of her misguided sons, England should fall, and her Star should lose its lustre, with her fall, for a long period of time, would the hopes of the African, whether in his own Continent or in the vast regions of America, be buried in the darkness of despair. I know well that in such case, Providence would, in due course of time

raise up some other nation to inherit our principles, and to imitate our practice. But taking the world as it is, and States as they are constituted, I do not know, and I say it with regret and with pain, I do not know any nation that is now ready in this respect to supply our place. I say then, that they who are the sincere friends of that cause of which we have been the strenuous advocates, and the not wholly unsuccessful supporters, instead of giving their assistance to a resolution which is founded upon a hollow pretence, ought to lend their aid to us, and to help us to accomplish those purposes, which they themselves have so deeply at heart—[cheers.]

Now I have said that the real question at issue is the choice between monopoly and free trade. The Noble Lord the Member for Lancashire (Lord Stanley), and the Right Hon. Baronet who spoke last (Sir Robert Peel), have given us their views of the meaning of the term Free Trade; and defined it to be a trade free from all duties whatever upon the importation of foreign produce. That is not my notion of free trade. That is not the free trade which I wish to see introduced. We must have an army and a navy, and civil establishments. To maintain these we must have a revenue; and in my opinion there is no more proper or legitimate mode of raising a part of that revenue than by duties upon the importation of foreign commodities. But then I say let those duties be laid on solely for purposes of revenue; let them not be laid on for what is called protection; that is, to enable a comparatively small number of men to carry on a trade in itself a losing one, at the expense of the rest of the community—[cheers.] I know that in an artificial state of society such as that in which we live, it is impossible at once, and without some delay to carry into full application, principles of this kind. Because if suddenly adopted, they would derange the course of transactions, and involve thousands in ruin. To do this, is neither our intention nor our wish. But let us keep these principles steadfastly in view; let them guide and direct our course; and let us apply them as nearly and as quickly as circumstances will permit—[cheers.]

Protection in the sense in which the word is used by those who now oppose the plan of the Government, is a tax levied upon the industry and skill of the mass of the

community to enable a few to remain indolent and unskilful—[cheers.]

Such protection is not only erroneous in principle, but after all, utterly useless to those for whose particular benefit it is maintained—[cheers.]

Shew me a trade that is free, by which I mean, open to fair competition, and I will shew you a trade carried on with intelligence, enterprize, and success. Shew me a trade that is highly protected, and I will shew you a set of men, supine, unimproving, and probably labouring under perpetual embarrassment—[cheers.]

But the evil does not end here. Not only does this excessive protection paralyze the very interests it is intended to invigorate; but it operates most injuriously upon the general welfare of the country, in relation to our commercial intercourse with foreign nations. For protection is a game that two can play at. It is impossible that a great country like England can go on protecting, as it is called, its various interests, and that other countries should not follow the example. Can we tell other countries that they ought to diminish the duties of their tariff; that competition is the very life of trade; that emulation inspires activity and enterprize and that without enterprize and activity commerce can never flourish nor be beneficial to those who carry it on? can we hold these doctrines to other nations, and at the same time persist in our own restrictive system?—[cheers.] When we propound these principles to Foreign Governments, they listen to our arguments with civil incredulity; they appeal from our doctrines to our practice; they point to our own tariff, and tell us in diplomatic paraphrase, “when you alter your own commercial system; when you bring down to a moderate amount your excessive import duties, we may become converts to your doctrines, and shall be ready to talk with you about a revision of our own tariff.”—[cheers.]

I have had to discuss these matters with most of the Foreign States with which we have commercial relations, and they are all in the same story. They invariably give us to understand that when we ask them to permit a more liberal admission of our manufactured goods into their markets, we ought to set them the example by allowing a more liberal admission of their produce into our market.

Commerce, they observe, is a system of barter, and if we exclude from our ports their corn, their timber, their sugar, their coffee, every great article, in short of their produce, which they could offer us in exchange for our commodities, how can we suppose that they can carry on trade with us? [cheers.]

I have said that one great evil of our restrictive system is that it induces other States to fancy that it is the secret of our prosperity, and that it sets them to imitate our example. Is this an imaginary evil? far from it. In proportion as the increase of communication between countries in time of peace, has enabled every country to be better informed as to what is going on elsewhere, other nations have seen more deeply into the details of our restrictive system, and have been tempted, some by ignorance, some by prejudice, some from a spirit of retaliation, to imitate our example—[hear, hear.]

First, there is the Prussian Commercial Union, which has spread itself over almost all of the central and northern states of Germany. That league has just renewed itself by treaty for 12 years from 1842. Next year their deputies will meet for the purpose of revising their tariff; and this house and the country deceive themselves greatly if they imagine that a perseverance in our restrictive system, and in our prohibiting duties, will not induce the German League to continue their present high duties upon our manufactures, and perhaps to increase those duties in such a manner as to shut our commodities out from the whole of that part of the market of Europe.—[hear.]

Russia and Sweden prohibit a great number of our manufactures, and when we ask them to relax their tariff, they say take our corn and timber, and then we will talk with you about admitting your manufactures into our ports—[hear.] About two years ago Sweden sent over here a nobleman of high distinction, and of great influence in his own country for the purpose of endeavouring to come to some agreement with us for a mutual modification of the tariffs of the two countries; but timber was our stumbling block; and we had no hope at that time of being able to carry through Parliament any arrangement of our timber duties, that would have met the views of the Swedish government; we had had a mortifying experience, but a short time before, of the manner in which

any proposition of that kind was likely to be dealt with in this house—[hear.]

France which ought to be a great market for our commodities ; France a country so near to us ; producing many things which we want ; and wanting many things which we produce : France has a tariff which excludes many of our principal manufactures. But France will not alter her tariff, unless we alter ours. As an instance of the extent to which this mania of protection rages, France not content with prohibiting our cotton goods, and excluding by high duties our iron, has lately descended to a minuteness of protection which would be ludicrous if it were not an indication of the force of existing prejudices on these matters. France has lately laid an excluding duty upon our needles and fish hooks, for the purpose of protecting that important branch of her own national industry !

The Belgians too are running wild with the notion of protection, and are for excluding by protecting duties almost every commodity which the industry of man can make—[hear].

When you preach to these foreign nations the absurdity of such practices, they reply, it is all very well ; but we observe that England has grown wealthy, and great by these means, and it is only now, when other nations are following her example that she has discovered that this system is a bad one ; when we shall have attained the same pitch of commercial prosperity, which England has reached, it will then be time enough for us to abandon a system which perhaps may then no longer be necessary—[hear].

It is in vain we tell these people that England has grown great and prosperous, not by means of this fallacious and mischievous system, but in spite of it. It is in vain we tell them that this protective system has checked our growth, and has prevented the full development of our national resources. Until we prove by our practice that we are sincere in our doctrines, neither France, nor Belgium, nor Germany, nor Russia, nor Sweden, nor any other country in either hemisphere, will be induced to relax their own restrictive and prohibitory laws—[hear, hear].

The United States of America have imitated our ex-



ample, and have established a protecting tariff. The ill effect of this tariff upon the commerce between these two countries has been mitigated by the circumstance that the Southern States are chiefly agricultural, and have few or no manufactures to protect, and that thus the protecting tariff of the north, cannot prevent a great trade between the two countries, the result of which is to send over to us vast quantities of that slave labour cotton, which all parties have acknowledged it is so essential for us to have, and which it would be impossible for us to do without. Yet no man can doubt that if England and the United States, were mutually to revise their scales of import duties, the commerce between the two countries would greatly increase.—[hear, hear.]

But are the United States the only country in America, where this vicious system has taken root? Mexico is following the example—and who, does the House think, are the parties who have petitioned the Mexican Government, for protection against the importation of British manufactures into Mexico? why some renegade sons of England, who have established manufactories in Mexico, and who are endeavouring to prevail upon the Mexican Government to exclude by high protecting duties, British manufactures of the same kind as those which they are themselves making. Such is the course which our restrictive system induces other countries to take.—[hear, hear.]

And what then is the state of our trade generally with other countries? It is quite true, as stated by the Right Hon. Bart. the Member for Tamworth, that there is nothing in the condition of our Foreign Trade, to inspire despondency; I trust that the resources of the country are too deeply rooted, to be withered even by this vicious system, though it prevents their full growth and development. But if you examine and analyse our Foreign Trade, you will trace in it remarkable proofs of the injurious effects of this system. You will see how these protecting laws cramp the industry of the country. Every year a smaller and smaller portion of the manufactures which we export consists of articles in the making of which much labour and skill are employed. Every year a greater portion of our exports consists of articles of an elementary nature, which are not destined for use and consumption, but are to serve as materials which are to afford employment to the

foreign manufacturers. For instance, the exportation of cotton goods does not increase in the same proportion as the exportation of yarn. Then again look to our artisan and capitalist. Both of them are leaving the country. The capitalist goes elsewhere with the notion of finding cheaper labour. The artisan with the hope of obtaining better remuneration for his industry. Every year our protecting system is raising up against us in other parts of the world, manufacturing competitors; and every year British skill, British industry, and British capital are transferring themselves abroad, to render the competition of Foreign Countries more and more formidable. We are thus ourselves assisting to exclude our own commerce from the markets of other countries—[hear.] If this system is persevered in, we shall at last come down to that spendthrift industry, which is to consist in exporting machinery, as well as the elements of manufactures; and when our exports consist of capital, skill, industry, machinery and materials, we shall no doubt wonder how it happens that our finished manufactures are no longer able to compete with those of other countries in the markets of the world—[hear, hear.]

Sir, in my opinion there never was a discussion in which it was more clear, which side of the house advocated the true interests of the nation, aye even the interests of those nominally protected classes, whose supposed interests have banded together so large a phalanx in opposition to the proposals of the government. [Cheers.]

But the Right Hon. Baronet, the member for Tamworth, has said that we the government have by the improvidence of our administration created the financial difficulties for the remedy of which we have brought forward these measures; and that we have ourselves been the cause of that excess of expenditure over income which our plan is intended to provide for. [hear.] But surely the Right Hon. Gentleman does not mean to say that the rebellion in Canada was owing to any misgovernment of ours; and as to our dispute with China, the Right Hon. Baronet, has very properly and very handsomely abstained from pre-judging a matter which is not yet ripe for discussion. [Cheers.] But then I would ask, has the deficiency arisen from our having made any undue increase in our military or naval forces? has it arisen from any wanton

expenditure incurred by the government in spite of the resistance of the Hon. Gentlemen opposite? on the contrary the government has been found fault with year after year for not augmenting the military and naval establishments of the country. They have reproached us for too much economy, never for being too prodigal.—[cheers.]

The Gentlemen opposite have therefore no right to attribute the present deficiency to any mismanagement or misconduct on the part of the government—it has arisen from a variety and from a combination of circumstances, over which the government had no control; and I will venture to say that if the gentlemen opposite had been in office that deficiency would not have been less; I abstain from giving an opinion whether it would have been greater. [cheers].

The question then is, whether the house will adopt the plan of my right hon. friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for a reduction of duties, by which the revenue would be increased, the commerce of the country relieved, and the industry of all classes encouraged; or whether the house will take counsel from the gentlemen opposite who would supply the deficiency by betaking themselves to a loan, or by imposing fresh taxes, and by thus adding to the burthens of the country.—[Cheers.]

Whatever may be the result of this discussion, and whether we succeed or not in our present attempt, depend upon it the days of these monopolies are numbered, and their doom is sealed [cheers.] The only question is whether they shall fall to day under our blow, or whether they shall be reserved to meet their fate hereafter from the hands of those very persons who now stand forward to defend them. [cheers.] To maintain them much longer is impossible, the country has spoken out upon the matter. The general opinion of all those persons who are engaged in carrying on the industry and commerce of the country is too strong to be resisted by any set of men who may be called upon to administer the Government.

What has been the course of Parliament in this respect for several years past? It has done nothing but destroy monopolies. First we abolished that monopoly which by the Test and Corporation Acts the members of the Established Church held against their Dissenting fellow subjects; this was accomplished by the efforts of my noble friend (Lord

John Russell,) assisted ultimately by the concurrence of the Right Hon. Baronet the Member for Tamworth. Then was attacked that giant monopoly which the Catholic disabilities gave to the Protestants of the kingdom, over their Catholic fellow countrymen. That monopoly defended itself with astonishing determination; its resistance was obstinate and fierce, but it measured its length upon the ground. Then was assailed that huge monopoly which placed in the hands of a comparatively small number of persons, the power of returning members to serve in the House of Commons. That battle was still more severe, the resistance was still more desperate; the conflict almost shook the country to its foundations; but at last the victory was complete, and that monopoly fell. [cheers.] Then came the monopoly by which certain self-elected Corporators exercised in the towns throughout the united kingdom, a paramount authority over the local interests and affairs of their respective boroughs. This was less vigorously defended and it has fallen.

Then there was the great monopoly by which the East India Company excluded the commerce of their fellow countrymen from all the vast regions of Asia; that was acknowledged to be indefensible, and it yielded without a struggle. [cheers.] We are now attacking another set of monopolies; and my Right Hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, (Mr. Labouchere,) has announced that he intends to carry the principle of relaxation still further, and to apply it to other parts of our tariff, so as to relieve our commerce from many of the trammels which at present confine it.—[cheers.]

These then are the principles on which we stand; our plan is plain, simple and intelligible. I think that Honourable Gentlemen opposite might have given us an equally plain and intelligible answer to our question, what they would propose to do.

They might have told us distinctly and at once whether they would rest their plan of finance upon the abolition of monopolies, or upon the maintenance of monopolies.

They have not however chosen to speak out, but I will venture to say that before these discussions are brought to a close they will be compelled to speak out. [cheers.]

It is due to themselves; it is due to us; it is due to Parliament; it is due to the country; that the opinions of

Honourable Gentlemen opposite upon these important matters should no longer be shrouded in mysterious silence, or be concealed by evasive declarations—[cheers.]

We have a right to call upon them, not to give us a new budget, for that we do not want, and would not accept if offered it, but to tell us aye or no whether they will adopt the principles on which we have founded our budget, and of which the country has unequivocally expressed its approbation.

But I will venture to predict, that although they may resist these measures to night for the purpose of obtaining thereby a majority in the division, yet if they should come into office, these are the measures, which a just regard for the finances and commerce of the country will compel them, themselves, to propose, and to carry—[Loud and repeated cheering.]

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